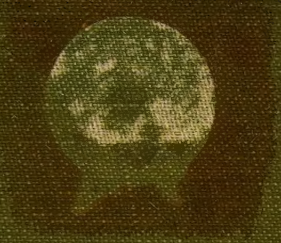

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RETREAT ADDRESSES

BY THE

REV. JESSE BRETT, L.Th.

CHAPLAIN OF ALL SAINTS' HOSPITAL, EISENTOWNE.

AUTHOR OF "THE ALTAR AND THE LIFE," "LOVE'S POWER," "THE SCHOOL OF DIVINE LOVE," "THE CROSS," ETC.

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PREFACE

It is scarcely necessary to say more by way of introduction to these pages, than that the addresses were given for the most part during a Retreat.

The times call for great earnestness and definiteness of spiritual life in all Christians, and in these addresses an attempt has been made to meet some of the needs from the Catholic standpoint. Catholic Sainthood is not an impossible ideal to one who understands the call, not merely of life in general, but of these times in particular. We cannot be aware of the deep spiritual movements beneath the noise and confusion of the Great War, and not realize some of the possibilities of saintly achievement which are ours. In the hope that some may be assisted in their effort to respond to the call, this book is sent forth.

The author appeals for the prayers of those who use the book.

J. B.

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SAINTHOOD

I

Of Perceiving the Ideal

THE Christian who would become a Saint must be an idealist in personal religion. He must have an end in view. He must know something of that towards which he directs his course and for which he labours unceasingly. If it be right to propose to ourselves ideals of attainment in human affairs, it becomes of the highest importance in those things which belong to eternity even more than to time. Without ideals there can be no perfection; and mediocrity may but disguise a soul without a vision. We are reasonably suspicious of visionaries; but a strong soul guided by a clear vision of sanctity becomes great indeed. Spiritual greatness is within the reach of every Catholic. Ours is the universal vocation: we are "*called to be Saints.*"

We assent to the truth of all this; but though the vocation be universal, there is not a general recognition of it as a personal blessing. We are not all of us

working towards some spiritual ideal; not all are attracted by a vision beautiful. Low standards of practice; easy satisfaction; weak surrender to the world; all these in their degree contribute to the causes which underly spiritual failure. A little wise introspection may disclose unsuspected effects of these very things upon ourselves; for we are not without holy desires, not strangers to longings which have their beginnings in moments of intuition. There are, surely, few souls so utterly insensible to spiritual movements that never in times of suffering or sorrow have they beheld, though but for a moment, a vision of life enriched through the reward of brave patience. Who has never known the gladness of some pure result of right action? Who in their best moments have not known the attraction of some Divine thought, or caught the flash of some mystic light? Who has never wished to be better and holier?

If we regard the times in which we live, times pregnant with a great future for mankind, can we escape the call to holiness? Can we not feel the awfulness of the struggle between good and evil? Was ever any conflict so like that which centred in the Cross of our Lord? The very contemplation of the struggle with its mighty issues is an approach to an ideal of sanctity. Through all the reek of battle we catch a glimpse of something fair and strong and pure, an ideal for men and nations. But there is more than

vision. We feel the insistence of a great demand. It is as though God were immediately requiring of us an effort of soul more splendid in its inspiration than anything we have ever yet made. He is calling for willing souls that He may make them Saints. It is our day of opportunity. When this day is passed, shall we stand among the Saints? Shall we stand in our self-chosen lot with the blankness of infinite regret?

We have read the words which Deborah uttered of old against those who stood not on the Lord's side.[1] Have they no meaning for us now? We may not always choose our place among the hosts of God. Our part is to be on His side, bringing to the common cause the power of developing holiness. We shall not fail of a place and a work, if first of all we are obedient to His call.

We are at the parting of the ways. The past has gone for ever. The future is scarcely yet understood; for we cannot read clearly the portents of the dawn. But that very condition of this time makes our opportunity. It has been said of S. Augustine that he lived at a time when the world in which he "lived was visibly changing and crumbling around him"; and that in the presence of so much that was changing the whole fabric of the Roman dominion, it seemed more than ever necessary to insist on that which would

[1] Judges v. 23.

endure, "and to reveal to souls shrinking before the outward portents of change and disaster the changeless refuge of the Eternal Love."[1] We are in the presence of a necessity no less great; the heart of humanity yearns for the love of God. How otherwise can we explain the spiritual restlessness of the time? Or, to change the metaphor, how otherwise regard the soul-hunger of men and women? What a time! What a need! What a work for willing souls to undertake!

"*Who is sufficient for these things?*" They who in simplicity live in the power of the love of God; who show it in conduct and speech which reveal the Divine love; who by the healthy attractiveness of goodness in themselves lead others to God. It is not for this necessary that we be saints, but it is necessary that we ourselves be aspiring to sainthood—that is, that we be persevering in the way of perfection; for the witness of a life so lived gives encouragement to weaker souls, and commends the religion we profess. What the pursuit of holiness may be to us is the thought we shall keep before ourselves in this Retreat. Let us seek to be renewed not only in the knowledge of spiritual requirements, but also in the grace of perseverance. And to begin with let us be quite sure of all that vocation to holiness involves, what it must henceforth mean to us.

[1] Flemming: *Mysticism in Christianity*, p. 82.

We must be content with no vague conception, or confused notion of sainthood. We must seek the desired clearness of thought under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We have many great examples among the Saints; there is much wonderful teaching on the subject of holiness which the Church treasures for her children; and we do well to attend to it. But in our own efforts after perfection we must not think to begin where the Saints have been shown to us in the beauty of their perfections, adorned with supernatural graces; their developed experience is not the point at which we must begin to imitate them. They do encourage us greatly; they do explain to us the deep ways of spiritual progress; but if we would attain to a like degree of sanctity we must learn as they did. We must in deep humility practise the virtues, laying the foundations of genuine sanctity. This is often a matter of years, though in His love to us God ever regards and blesses with increased grace the souls of good will, even bestowing graces not all unlike those in which the Saints rejoiced. Only let us beware of thinking ourselves the proper recipients of such favours. Each has his proper gift of God; and no favour, no spiritual experience, can be to another what it is to the person who experiences it.

But above all the Saints learned from our Lord. He calls to His disciples, "*Come unto Me*"; "*Learn of Me.*" And our attitude towards Him as our Lord

and Teacher must be one of *love*. Where that is, *there will be knowledge*. Only as we love can we understand the deep teaching of the New Testament. Let us seek to be with our Lord now. He sets before us the great commandment of love. "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*" [1] All His teaching is the unfolding of the full meaning of that law. He shows how it is to govern the soul, and order all its life in relation to God, reaching to the highest thought of union with Him. "*Come unto Me*"; "*Learn of Me*"; "*Abide in Me.*" And this He develops in the yet more wonderful thought of His Own indwelling. "*Abide in Me, and I in you*"; "*He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, dwelleth in Me and I in him.*" [2] As we read all this, so simply expressed; as we learn the full import of His words in the silence of our souls with Him in love; we see how wonderful, beautiful, and glorious is the ideal He sets before us. It attracts and holds us as a wondrous vision in which we discern ourselves transformed in love. Have we at times wondered at the high attainment of some Saint, marvelled at his experience, been held in admiration of his soul in its close union with God? We have read S. John's Epistles and wondered

[1] S. Matt. xxii. 37–39. [2] S. John xv. 4; vi. 56.

if we could ever attain to his richness of thought in the Divine love. We have longed to be able to say with S. Paul, "*I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.*"[1] Their experience is so profound and complete, their mysticism so simply true, that although other Saints have written much more about the soul's life in the way of perfection, none have ever surpassed them in actual knowledge. But they are so simple and humble in all that concerns themselves, that the greatness both of their experience and their holiness is not apparent to unsympathetic readers of their history and their writings. But God hath ever care for His Saints and protects their virtues.

And they learned from Christ. It was not from human teachers that they received instruction in Divine Wisdom. We may learn much from them; but they learned directly from Him. Perhaps we should learn this most of all from them; that they who would be perfect in His love, must learn directly from Him, however much they profit by the examples and precepts of the Saints. S. Paul learned from our Lord in that long retirement which followed closely upon his conversion.[2] It was, as we should say, a long and wonderful retreat which he made in preparation for the work to which he was called. If we compare his statements in other places we must conclude it was a time of deep learning, of intimate communing

[1] Gal. ii. 20. [2] Gal. i. 18.

with our Lord,[1] and of rapturous experiences. S. John, the beloved Apostle, the Apostle of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, learned the wondrous ways of love in closest companionship with his Master. He knew the Heart of the Beloved. And, moreover, these great Apostles, and their brother Apostles with them, not only lived this life built up and guided and beautified in the love of Jesus, it was also the ideal they held up to the growing Church. It was a high standard presented in the simplicity of love; a standard we dare not reject if we are faithful Catholics.

In love we abide with our Lord, and *learn* of Him through the action of love, enlarging and illuminating. Love is to the faithful soul the vehicle of learning. In a sense to love is to know. Where there is love He can in a moment communicate truth, deep and wonderful, beyond anything we may gain by the labour of learning.

And yet further, as love grows and we learn of our Lord Beloved, He leads us to a deep truth, very humbling, very sweet, but not always perceived through the early attractions of the spiritual way: it is not enough to know, to possess knowledge, and to rejoice in knowing high things; we must *be* holy, *be in ourselves transformed to the likeness of the Beloved.* The desire to be must exceed our desire to know. Much reading may stimulate the desire for knowledge; but

[1] Cf. 1 Cor. xi. 23; xv. 3; Gal. i. 11; 2 Cor. xii. 2.

that which is good in itself is not always without danger. The knowledge of high things and familiarity with the records of saintly experiences may so easily lead a soul to insecure satisfaction. If spiritual study be an attraction in itself, we should be only the more careful in the practice of solid virtues, in order to escape the temptation to pride in the mere pleasure of knowing. This is not in any way to discourage the student of saintly lore, but to utter a warning which may lead to sure results. We want to become saints, and not simply to be able to discourse about Saints.

Do we begin by wanting to be saints? When we have sought to *be* as well as to *know*, we are nearer our ideal than when first we aspired to sainthood, though to ourselves we appear less. This is true of the Saints generally; though sought out for their spiritual learning, they were more remarkable in their dis-esteem of themselves. In their desire to be holy they shrank from any display of wisdom which might exalt them in popular admiration. Even so we know they could not be hid. Their simplest words proclaimed the wisdom which was from above, while their lives were its clearest illustration.

Look out from the present opportunity, from your present state; be true to the best, the highest, the purest vision of sainthood which is presented as that which is possible to *yourselves*. Taking full account

of your lives, what is the highest, and withal the most reasonably possible ideal before you? Regard it carefully, reverently, and with the sole desire of knowing the will of God as to your sanctification. In that is to be understood the clearest call of God. Do not look beyond your own proper environment to find the road to sanctity. If you are true to yourselves and to God in your own proper state and place to-day, you have no further to look for the path that will lead you to holiness. Our Lord comes to each of us where we are, saying: "My child, be Mine *here*, be holy *here*." This is true even when He has favoured a soul with a particular vocation; for response is made where we are, and He will open the way to further obedience. Do you reply: "Oh, but I cannot be holy just *here;* there is this, or that, hindrance, burden, responsibility. There is this hardness repressing every feeling, and checking every aspiration; I should be so much freer, and indeed better without it." But that is only rejection of the Cross, without which no soul could be perfectly holy. The grace of true cross-bearing is a capacity for holiness. That which we would put away is that which, rightly used, would become the surest means to holiness. No; what is needed is not removal but acceptance; not rejection but consecration—in short, *love*. Love accepts, employs, and makes it the means of purer offering. Such effort and work of love results in yet higher

experience of the soul in God. Its very desire is raised, taken by the Holy Spirit into the very Heart of Eternal love. We know within ourselves how impossible it is to express in prayer the desire of love born of the effort to correspond to the motions of Divine love; we know the longing which overpasses expression; it is there that S. Paul's words encourage us: "*the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*" [1]

Our ideal is not indistinct. Sainthood may be contemplated in a general sense; but unless the soul rises to the personal call, aspires to its own perfection according to its own opportunities, it makes no real progress. It is in that singleness of purpose, that steadfastness of intention in the way revealed as peculiarly *our own*, that love is proved in its own perfect offering. It has been said that without "a governing ideal a man is a lost soul, lacking spiritual stability and truth. The accepted ideal is at once the law and liberty of the personal life." If such a statement be tested by the lives of the Saints its truth is manifest. It gives us a valuable point for our own consideration when we are trying to discern with fresh clearness our own ideals. To know that for which we live and work is essential to success as much in

[1] Rom. viii. 26.

spiritual matters as in things material and temporal. Let us be clear in our thought and true with ourselves.

A rare simplicity is required for the understanding of spiritual ideals. It is the simplicity of love that passes by everything else that it may gaze unhindered upon our Lord Beloved, and in the vision of His perfections can find the perfect standard for the human soul.

. . . . . .

O Holy Spirit, Who in Thine unspeakable love to us hast both called us to holiness, and also given us the desire to become holy; be present with us to inspire our thoughts, and direct our aspirations, that the very purpose of Thy love in this Retreat may be realized to Thine eternal praise; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

O Holy Spirit, Who art our Light and Guide, enlighten our minds that we may both perceive the pure attraction of saintliness, and also be directed in the highway of attainment, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

II

Of Penitence

We have thought of ideals, and contemplated that which we have understood as *the ideal* for ourselves. Whatever it be it is an expression of some definite type of saintliness. But if it be a true ideal it is not of our own fashioning. God has His Own ideal for each of us. We cannot be trusted with the shaping of our own spiritual course, however we may esteem our own ability. We should, if left to ourselves, avoid hardness, and choose the attractive ways; we should be tempted to change many of the conditions of daily life; we would like our lives to be without pain, or shadows of any kind. This would lead to a self-pleasing picture, not to a vision of sanctity. It is not God's ideal for us. When we compare any such spiritual outlook with that of the great Saints, we see it is no picture of sanctity at all. Therefore let us in this Retreat endeavour to be true to the great examples of the Saints, while in humble devotion to our Lord we learn of Him, and answer to the feeling of His Sacred Heart towards

us. Can we venture to say what is His feeling? Let us ask it in the words of a very devout soul: "Lord, what dost Thou wish of me?" And the answer was given: "*I want thee, thyself.*"

A Retreat is a time for the examination of our whole life in relation to His purpose towards us. Life in the world was never more complex and difficult; occupations leave little time for the deeper concerns of the spirit; the demands of the world rival the claims of God. Prayer, too often, becomes hurried and superficial, and meditation is neglected. Communions are perhaps not less frequent; but they lack something, and we are not quite as happy in them as we used to be. And then, too, there are strange influences at work in the world—strange in the sense that they lie outside the order of Catholic life, though offering consolations to suffering and sorrowing hearts. Above all there is the agony of the war. And if it be relieved by the consciousness of magnificent heroism and splendid sacrifice, it is yet a source of anxious questioning of the Faith.

How can we find an answer to our own hearts? By giving ourselves to the contemplation of spiritual realities. By seeking amid all that appears so confusing and perplexing the Divine ideal. It is the ideal of the Cross, it is that which inspired the great souls of the past and guided them to great spiritual achievements, and made them Saints. Whatever be

the difficulties presented in these days to the realization of sainthood, the fact remains that *these are days in which saints may be made.* And we may dare to say, the Saints who through this age reach their perfection will be among the greatest in the Kingdom of God. It is in times of greatest need that God calls souls to the heights of sanctity. It is therefore not without reason that we make it the thought of this Retreat.

We come then to our Lord desiring first of all to realize ourselves in relation to Him in love. The thought of our sins, and mistakes, our failures and disappointments, presses upon us and we mean to deal with it in some serious acts of penitence. But before we attempt the close scrutiny of our lives, let us renew our hearts in love. We must know the Heart of the Beloved if we would do penance for our sins; for penitence is love sorrowing for sin; and we cannot sorrow for sin effectually until we know something of the love of the Divine Penitent. Let us therefore renew our love, fixing our minds upon our Lord, and so examine ourselves.

How difficult is this work! How weary we become of the oft-repeated sins! How perplexed as we review the occasions of sin! How quickly absorbed, through regard of self, in the immediate and outward effects of sin! But we should humble ourselves before God in the desire to deal with our

sin according to His mind towards us. We should look more to God than to ourselves. "When thou attackest any root of sin," wrote Walter Hilton, "fix thy thought more upon God Whom thou desirest, than upon the sin thou abhorrest." We grieve for the sin committed; but love impels us to forsake it and seek henceforth the honour of God. It is His Own unspeakable love which constrains us. When with the humiliating sense of our sins we turn to Him, He meets us with love; not overlooking our sins, but welcoming the love which guides us to His Feet. He knows there is love, and desire for holiness, and He unveils our sin when He beholds us prepared in love to forsake it. The woman who talked with our Lord by the well at Sychar felt the force of His strong love, and in contrast with His purity saw the dark stains of her own life. "*He told me all that ever I did.*"[1] But how much more wonderful is the discovery of its sins and imperfections to a soul that already loves. There is sorrow as each fact of sin becomes evident; sorrow which is essentially an act of love, for as we only know the sin through the love which aspires to God, so the contrition produced is love. Very tenderly does He make known the sin, not the bare outline of sin, but rather its effect upon us—yes, and its effect upon Himself. His Sacred Heart is grieved;

[1] S. John iv.

we feel the sorrow which made His Passion the great act of contrition, is still for us a living reality. Love has been wounded—His love—yes, and our love too in so far as we really love Him.

Oh, it is very wonderful, very awful. The love we *know* in that hour is so full of pain, so full, too, of tender sweetness, that we are saved from despair. How we hate the sin as we contemplate it in suffering love. How deep is our self-loathing. How unsparing He is, not hiding the real badness of our sins. If only we could say what we feel, or express all that we know as love probes our being! We can only cast all upon Him Whose Sacred Heart feels an even greater pain for us, and offer as our confession His knowledge of us. Very wonderful, then, in its strength is the thought of the Holy Spirit's co-operation, bearing into the Heart of Eternal Love the wordless contrition of the loving soul. Out of the depths of soul agony and misery there rises the wordless appeal of contrite love—He bears it perfected in His Own unutterable groaning into the deep of eternal love and righteousness.

De profundis

"Out of the deep have I called unto thee, O Lord : Lord, hear my voice.
O let thine ears consider well : the voice of my complaint.
If thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss : O Lord, who may abide it?
For there is mercy with thee : therefore shalt thou be feared.

I look for the Lord; my soul doth wait for him : in his word is my trust.
My soul fleeth unto the Lord : before the morning watch, I say, before the morning watch.
O Israel, trust in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy : and with him is plenteous redemption.
And he shall redeem Israel : from all his sins."

As truly as the Psalmist could rise to an act of praise, so may we, for there is never discouragement to the soul that is contrite. Love is a living force, ever exalting the soul that loves, ever moving the lover towards the Beloved. It is therefore the inspiration of effort. In the vision of love which opened to us the way of penitence, we beheld the glory unearthly, divine, of that sainthood which attracted us. We perceived that penitence is essential to holiness; and the obligations incurred by every true penitent are recognized as the steps of the upward way.

The awakening of the soul to contrite love is accompanied by a holier sense of obligation. Love and not expediency must be the motive in our works of satisfaction. Expedience is the ruin of saintly ideals. Love can never give itself to matters of calculation, or to bargaining. Nothing short of most complete abandonment in love can satisfy the soul of the penitent. It is not a mere impulse of unbalanced emotion that we observe in such ideal penitents as S. Mary Magdalene, or S. Mary of

Egypt; it is rather the absorption of their love by the love of the Sacred Heart of the Redeemer. The love of the penitent melts into the sorrow of His Heart, and in that union of sorrow He entirely possesses the soul He saves, He sees of the travail of His Own Soul and is satisfied. This accounts for the wonderful progress of truly penitent souls, and their amazing confidence in the Beloved. They are carried along under an ennobling sense of the tremendous obligation of love. Even when life must be marked by peculiar suffering we see them advance with only greater rapidity. Whether for the perfecting of their own souls through offerings of reparation, or for the accomplishment of some work for which they are peculiarly fitted by experience of love, they appear as chosen souls marked out for extraordinary work. It has been observed by some that great penitents appear as in some sense the favourites of God. But to this we may reply that not all penitents could be so described; only they who through penitence have attained to a greatness of love which, as we have seen, exalts them to effective union with our Lord. If the poorness of our own penitence has led us to a less wonderful degree of love, we may through renewal of all advance yet further; and let us only desire to be ourselves, through that love, an abiding satisfaction to His Sacred Heart.

We may, perhaps, with some profit to ourselves, notice some further effects of this experience of love through penitence which are produced in certain souls. Their very love appears to attract the Beloved to them. We can approach this only with deepest reverence. Among the Saints have been many who have known in themselves something of the Agony in Gethsemane. Drawn to the side of their Lord they have been allowed by Him to share His sorrow and His pain.[1] Sometimes at regular periods, and usually at the hour corresponding to that of His Agony, sometimes under special conditions, these souls have suffered. And our own day furnishes examples. Naturally they are hidden, and known to very few; for it is pain to them to speak of such graces. They suffer as penitents, they suffer because they love; they make reparation.

What wondrous designs of love our Lord must have for such souls. We may not speculate about them; but rather adore Him in thankful hope for the Church and for the world while He finds some to whom He can come with such freedom, souls He has endowed with supernatural powers of sympathy. How dear must not they be to Him whom He thus calls through penitence to a share in His Own sorrows. How dear to Him must be a soul

[1] B. Margaret Mary, the Lady Julian, and others.

that knows Gethsemane! Like the great Angel of the Agony they know the secret both of love and of pain. We may meet them in the world; and if we observe them well we shall see that they bear the impress of the Cross; and yet it is not dark and unattractive, there is no look of oppression, no morbid abjection apparent; but a touch of Divine love so deep, so silent, so illusive when we try to discover what it is, that we simply wonder. They have the mark of sanctity through the love which enables them to suffer with the Beloved and to share the sorrows of His Sacred Heart.

Knowledge of the wonderful ways of God with such souls as we have described, should encourage us in every movement of love in ourselves. Are we convinced of sin? Are we sorry? Is it for His sake that we sorrow? . . . Look out to Him, not reckoning the losses, or regarding the promptings of self-love. Be wholly surrendered to the Sacred Heart; give Him the satisfaction He seeks; break away from all fettering conditions; then Absolution will come with all the joy of blessed soul-freedom. New power to advance will be given; power to deal with the occasions of temptation; power to vanquish the old enemy. Satan fears the loving soul. When he tries to find an occasion for temptation, love will rise in defence of the soul. There is more to be gained by simple acts of love in the hour of

temptation than many suppose; for the soul that loves can quickly take refuge in the Heart of the Beloved and be safe. The cry of love is not rejected, but is responded to at once. Even though temptation may continue it is only for the ultimate triumph of the soul. And therefore to those who after their Confession return to conflict there is always this assurance: if they are true to the love which springs afresh in their contrition, they need fear no evil how strong soever it may be. "*I will trust and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation.*"

And yet another point must claim our attention before we leave this subject of penitence—the joy of the forgiven penitent. Contrite love is not a joyless emotion. "*There is joy in the presence of the Angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.*"[1] There is joy in the Sacred Heart of Jesus when a soul is restored to Him in love. So there should be joy in our hearts for all His goodness towards us; joy also in the renewal of love with the restoration of freedom; joy in the communion of love with Him Who ever marks the return of the penitent with tender favour. Let us honour our Lord Beloved by our humility, not forgetting we have sinned; let us honour Him by our joyfulness, not forgetting He has forgiven us.

[1] S. Luke xv. 10.

. . . . . .

O Lord Jesus, Who to the sorrows of Thy Sacred Heart didst add yet deeper pain in bearing the burden of our sins; look upon us now in our desire to offer true contrition for all the many faults, and failures, and imperfections of which we are conscious. Resting on Thy love, we plead the merits of Thy Death, and aspire to newness of life through the power of Thy Resurrection; Who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Spirit, One God, world without end. Amen.

III

Of our Relation to God

We are endeavouring to direct our thoughts to the true conception of Catholic sainthood. It is not a conception of comparative holiness, but of perfection according to the will of God. That is, we have before us the ideal which represents the perfection of ourselves through all that we are by nature and by grace; we aspire to union with God by love, the consummation of perfect love. And we know within ourselves that it is no impossible ideal, for love can never admit the suggestion of impossibility where itself is concerned. Difficulty there must and will be in every case; but love regards it without fear, for at the heart of love is the will to victory. If in the Saints that element of their love has developed to a passion through their experience in suffering, in us surely it may be the power with which we may meet and overcome those difficulties which are nearest to us as we set forward on the saintly way. Let us now consider the place and reality of this love in ourselves.

Through Penance we pass into a certain openness

of life towards our Lord in which our personal relation to Him is of greatest moment. Set free from the encumbrance of sin and cleansed from its guilt, we are met with the simple fact of direct responsibility towards Him. The reality of our love, the strength of our purpose in the spiritual life, the fulness of our hope in Him, is evident. We are at a point from whence we may go forward with renewed devotion and courageous endeavour. It is a wonderful and beautiful time when for the moment we stand in the light of God, newly restored to our place in relation to Him, a moment when the joy of the pardoned soul mingles with the rejoicing of the Angels, and yet more intimately with the joy of the Sacred Heart of the Beloved. Who would not be clear in spiritual purpose, and resolute in love, as this divine joy is felt? Who could endure the thought of wasting the grace given?

No aimlessness, or lack of purpose, can be permitted. We must guard against desultoriness in religious practices. Order and method must be observed, and above all we should maintain steadfastness of intention. We are dealing with matters of the highest concern; we cannot without fault allow carelessness in the things of God. It follows, therefore, that we must live intelligently with Him. God and the soul are concerned together in a great matter—the sanctification of an immortal; and the

beginning of that work is the recognition of love as between the soul and God. We are not strangers to this fact of love. Our presence here witnesses both to our anxiety concerning our relation to Him, and also to our confidence in Him.

Let us at this point look to our Lord Beloved with the double question which has come to us from the prayer of a Saint. "Lord, what am I to Thee? What art Thou to me?"

> "Lord, what am I to Thee?" The creature of My hand; the child of My love, for whom I gave Myself, for whom I suffered and died; whom by every device and means of love I have sought to make My Own; whom I love and desire with eternal steadfastness; whose trials I know; whose sorrows I share; whose sins I have borne; whom I can never forsake, but must ever keep until the eternal purpose of My love is fulfilled in thee.
>
> "Lord, what art Thou to me?" By my own choice of Thee, Thou art to me Master and Lord and King; yea, by the election and choice of love Thou art to me "Beloved." Thou art all this to me, for through the manifestation and glory of Thy love I behold Thine incomparable beauty, I recognize Thy claim upon me. By a thousand evidences of Thy love, by

unnumbered tendernesses, Thou hast appealed to my heart and won my love. Thou hast been faithful through my unfaithfulness, constant when I have wavered, mindful when I have been forgetful. Through all my weakness and sin and wilfulness, Thou hast conquered by love. Thou art to me all—Thou art my Lord Beloved.

It is well to define to ourselves our relationship to Him. Our own hearts will go beyond such formal expressions as these, and supply from many a personal experience the touch of conviction, the pure consciousness, the living love, which no words can convey. And if we would more often bring this into our prayer we should be both strengthened and encouraged for the life to which we are called. The world which knows not the Lord Jesus will not fail to question those who appear to be His friends and lovers. Even in the Church of God there are some who do not know Him. It is still true of Him, "*He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His Own, and His Own received Him not.*" [1] There are some, even practising Christians, whose interior knowledge of our Lord has developed so little that they are surprised by, and do not understand, the fervour of some more devoted souls. And it is those who are

[1] S. John i. 10, 11.

nearest to us in faith and worship who are most ready for that which we can give. And we must be ourselves prepared in the reality of love to give a clear consistent answer.

You will remember how the Bride in the Canticle was asked by the "daughters of Jerusalem": "*What is thy Beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women*"?[1] "This question," wrote an early father, "is asked whenever any believer converses with a believing brother, and they mutually suggest words of heavenly desires, to increase their affection for things above. Tell me, who now long and desire to arrive at the vision of my Creator, *what is thy Beloved*—that is, how Christ ought to be loved."[2] "They ask her this question," writes yet another father, "because she is the *fairest among women*, and they gather that the chosen Bridegroom of one so lovely must be Himself a marvel to look upon."[3] These two fathers suggest the two directions to which we must look with sympathy. There are some who, meeting with one another, are mutually cheered and inspired by the love and devotion which proclaim the rule of Christ in each heart. There are others who admire holiness and are arrested by the evidence of devotion, but do not know why the Christian life can be so beautiful or the person so gracious. The answer should

[1] Cant. v. 9. [2] Cassiodorus. [3] Richard of S. Victor.

be unhesitating, the truth plain to every serious observer.

Hear the answer of the Bride: "*My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.*" [1] We need not follow her in the description of His graces which follows; these first words will guide us. *Chiefest among ten thousand*—"lifted up as a Standard." To the loving soul He is *all*. There is no one to compare with Him. Raised above all, He is to her the rallying-point of all her powers, the object of devotion, claiming all fidelity. In Him and by Him she conquers; and her love is through Him the secret of all grace and power and beauty.

Let us ask ourselves if He be this to us, or if there be yet the need of most loving carefulness, even of renunciation, before we can be quite true when we say: He is to me "*chiefest among ten thousand.*" His desire is to be exalted by us in love above all rivals—yea, that we so love Him that no rival could be possible. But that His desire may be fulfilled, we must give Him His rightful place, enthrone Him within our hearts, and guard His throne with zealous care; for unless we keep the heart with diligence we shall in little things very soon begin to neglect Him. And, oh, how sensitive our Lord is to the neglect of those who love Him! Sometimes we have felt it; a shadow has fallen between the soul and Him; we

[1] Cant. v. 10.

have fallen a little from the height of our love's ascent; the vision is more distant. The Saints have told us how He has shown His displeasure when some small matter has been allowed to distract attention from Himself. This is not Divine anger, but Divine solicitude; for He desires the perfection of love in one whom His Own love is transforming into the beauty of sainthood. Let us always try to understand the working of His love towards us; we shall find He is as strict in the demand of love as He is tender in its expression.

Hence we approach the great aim and purpose of love in ourselves—*to know our Lord Beloved*, and live in right relation to Him. "My God, my All!" cried S. Francis out of his joyous realization of that relationship. We have never, perhaps, felt more than the beginning of such rapturous consciousness of what He is to us, and we cannot force our feeling; it would be wrong to do so, for the over-strained soul is sooner or later overtaken with depression. The foundation is too weak to support the height to which the inner life has been temporarily raised. There is work to be done, and that of most loving nature, in making sure of the foundation. We have first to be exercised in the simple intimacies of our relationship—let us even dare to say, in the common courtesies of our relationship. Our Lord is ever thus towards those He loves; as the Lady Julian

remarked in the revelations of His love which He vouchsafed to her. He wills that we cultivate an openness of manner with Him which, because of a profound sense of love, never sinks to irreverence. He would have us abide always in His presence, in the sanctuary of our hearts, conversing with Him, doing all external work, and fulfilling all outward obligations as so many sacred duties of love. It will matter little where we are or with whom we are so long as that inner service of love is uninterrupted. Because of the secret intercourse of love we shall get very near the ideal of unceasing prayer.

Devout souls attracted to prayer often experience difficulty on account of domestic and social duties which apparently can be fulfilled only at the cost of recollection. But how many have become Saints through precisely that difficulty. It may be for any one of us the appointed way. And if, indeed, it please our Lord to call a soul to a detached and cloistered life, that one will only the better respond to special opportunities—and, we may add, resist more successfully the peculiar temptations of the cloistered life—after having won the grace which God gives to the faithful in the more open ways of the world. How great may be the influence upon the common life of any soul living in the simplicity of love with our Lord, no one can tell; but the results will be very precious in His sight, and greatly to the

surprise of the soul itself in the Day when the fruits of all love and devotion are seen in the Heavenly Kingdom itself.

In such a life we shall grow in understanding of our Lord Beloved through immediate experience of Him. To have experience of God is to be simply conscious of the meeting of love with Him. This may be ours in some degree whatever the service or occupation of the moment. It may be the inner light of some extraordinary grace. But what we need to remember for our comfort in uneventful days is that we are not dependent upon rare and unusual flights of devotion for that experience of God which is our joy. We may grow more perfectly in understanding of our Lord by living with Him at all times; and I doubt not that they who in the humility of love abide thus with Him will sooner or later have experience of the other also.

There are some fruits of this life which are essentially the marks of developing holiness.

(*a*) The first to be noticed is *naturalness* in religion, simplicity and un-self-consciousness. How *natural* our Lord was and is in all His life with men! To contemplate Him in that simple characteristic alone is to find our own love marvellously assisted by the vision of His perfect Self-giving as He meets us within the simple terms, *I and thou*, upon the basis of our human birth, all the love of the Godhead,

all the glory of Divinity, prevailing through hiddenness in the simplicity of His regard. Let us meet Him in the same way—humbling ourselves to Him as He condescends to us. The constant practice of love in this way will lead through experience of Him to a certain naturalness and absence of self-consciousness, greatly to be desired. And oh, the winning power of a life so marked! But what do we see, all too often? Devout catholics who can never forget themselves, or behaving as though afraid they may lose something by yielding to an easy manner. Do they not sometimes lose more by some momentary lack of charity? . . . This need not be. It will not be, as we really live in the love of the Sacred Heart. The Divine love is so gloriously free, and so eternally sure, that to become identified with it is to become ourselves free. It is the soul's security as well as the secret of its influence. Oh, to be so oned to our Lord in His love that we may be wholly self-forgotten in the simplicity of our union with Him. We might profitably meditate upon this characteristic of saintliness in our Lady pre-eminently, and after her in all the great Saints.

(*b*) With naturalness there will develop also a *deepened spirituality.* While we adore our Lord as He meets us in the tender naturalness of *I and thou,* we find ourselves led immediately into an other-worldly region; just as of old they who heard

Him speak felt a spirituality they could not define. "*He told me all that ever I did*"; "*never man spake like this man*"; "*they marvelled.*" "*Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way; and while He opened to us the Scriptures?*" They were subject to spiritual conviction; they were compelled to spiritual perceptions. As they responded, spirit to Spirit, their whole outlook both of faith and conduct was spiritualized. No one could be in His presence without a certain consciousness of uplifting, of spiritual attraction. Thus it is with every soul that abides with Christ. There is an inbreathing of His Spirit, an unconscious correspondence to the holy environment, until the spiritual habit is fixed. When we mark it in some living presentment we are apt to forget the discipline and prayer and patience through which it became fixed. We see the glow of the Divine presence which tells us the soul has been with God, even as the Israelites saw the face of Moses when he had been with God on Sinai. It may be we are moved to wish the like for ourselves. *And we can have it.* But we must be much with our Lord, responding in every experience of Him to that Divine spirituality to which He introduces us. We must follow Him as He directs our thoughts, guides our steps, opens to us the finer visions of the spiritual world, fills us with heavenly desires, moves us to the surrender of our whole will

so that we will holiness as we are arrested by spiritual reality. *We can have it*—but we are not to know that we have it. And if some would tell us of it, let us, like Moses, put a veil over it—the veil of humility, while seeking only the more to abide with our Lord lest the touch of earthly praise darken the glory of that which should be kept for God alone. Moses uncovered his face when he went into the Tabernacle to converse with God; only in the seclusion of our prayer may we not seek to hide the glory of Divine gifts. The graces of the Bride are for the praise of the Beloved.

(*c*) True spirituality is buoyant and joyous, and wholly removed from shallow sentimentality. The love of God is indeed as a burning fire and its presence in the soul cannot be hid. The joy of the soul in that love is great as its flame is vehement. Love burns in the depths of the soul and nothing has power to quench it. Where there is but little love, joy is not deep nor constant. The trials of life, the spiritual discipline, the sorrows and pains which come to the soul, cause depression and sadness. But with developing life the love of God so raises the soul that the joy never departs. The joy is a possession we hold with God. To love Him, is to know His love under all conditions and circumstances. To be able to observe the working of His love in us, and through us, at all times is to know a joy very

calm, very deep: the joy of certainty as we rest in the Sacred Heart. Why are we not more joyful? If we realized all that is ours through right relation to our Lord Beloved there would be no sadness, but only the pure joy of the Saints.

Joy is a real note of sanctity, and as we aspire to sanctity let us live in the love the fruit of which is joy.

. . . . . .

O Lord God Almighty, Whom to know is everlasting life; make us so to increase in love to Thee that our knowledge of Thee may grow unto that degree of perfection which Thou seekest in us. Make us so strong in the grace of active union with Thee, that in all things we may outwardly witness to that which we inwardly hold, and live joyously in praise of Thy love; Who livest and reignest with the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

IV

Of Suffering and Sacrifice

In true sainthood we behold the embodiment of great results. God and the soul are mutually concerned in those results. God sees in the Saint the completeness both of His Own work and also that of the soul. It is the work of love from both. That spiritual nobility which distinguishes the Saint is the infused character of Divine love. It is developed through profound experience, a little of which we must now try to understand.

Who is sufficient for the achievement of love? Who does not falter before its tremendous claims? Who is not sometimes in doubt, not of the claim, but of the power to meet it? And yet we know that only as we pay the debt of love do we get nearer to the attainment of our spiritual ideal. We will to become saints. That is, we will the Divine work of love.

Let us now with renewed love approach the thought of the training of a saint; for the Saints are trained in love. Let us be quite sure that we understand this. The training may be long, arduous, painful, *but it is*

love all through. It is begun, continued and ended in love. However hard or strenuous the life, even though lived in the way of religious observance, it will not make the saint if the motive of love be wanting. There is a vast amount of work and suffering which are both unblessed and unprofitable to the souls concerned; but which if reinforced by love would at once become powerful means to sanctification. It would be well to ask ourselves if we are meeting *all* occasions of work and suffering in the energy of love; not the few, or special, occasions only, but, as of equal importance, the everyday cares and difficulties. In one way or another the Cross must be borne, and love alone can support it. Hear our Lord saying to us as to His two ambitious Apostles: "*Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?*"[1] We can expect nothing short of this if we are to be perfectly trained in the school of the Saints. Can we look up to Him and say: "*We are able*"? Think of Him saying to us: "*Ye shall drink indeed of My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with.*" Will our hearts fail us? . . . What will be the sweetness, what the bitterness of that Chalice of the Beloved? Except in general terms we can be told beforehand but little of either. Love accepts without question whatever the Beloved wills to bless; yea,

[1] S. Matt. xx. 22–23.

welcomes it for His sake, and seeks to hold it with strong purposefulness in union with Him, made strong in that which enabled Him to endure His Passion. Whether the Chalice be sweet or bitter it is to be tasted *with Him*, and we are to learn that deep truth, always dear to the Saints, that the sweetness is reached through the bitterness. Why must this be? We cannot know the joy of the Sacred Heart if we experience nothing of its sorrow. "*These are they which have come out of great tribulation . . . therefore are they before the Throne.*" [1]

Let us contemplate the Saints. They glow with the purity of most refined love. Upon them rests the glory of the Divine acceptance. They are pleasing to God. They are a joy unto themselves through that which they are to Him, and through all His love effects in them. But it is all with reminiscence of the life of discipline. So the wise man understanding their beatitude said: "*As gold in the furnace hath He tried them, and received them as a burnt-offering.*" [2]

There is a twofold operation of love in the training of a Saint. The soul is both passive and active in love.

(*a*) "*As gold in the furnace hath He tried them.*" They have been purified; they have come forth as from fire, all dross and imperfection removed, all earthliness purged away; all that was unlovely in

[1] Rev. vii. 14. [2] Wisdom iii. 6.

them, or unfit for the presence of God transformed by the Divine action into some imperishable grace. God has wrought upon them in love which as living fire has penetrated them; and He did not abate its vehemence while aught of His desire towards them was unfulfilled.

But while so regarding the soul of a Saint, or thinking of our own as subject to the same purifying flame of love, let us remember that in the Divine estimation it *is gold* before it enters the furnace; and being gold it is not hurt by the fire, it suffers no loss, it comes forth again complete in itself and *pure*. At what pains God is for the soul! How great is its worth in His sight! And this of any soul: *my soul:* so precious that God cares for it as made to endure for ever in His Kingdom; and yet in His sight, yea in my own sight also, *needing* thus to be tried in the fire and made pure for that Kingdom.

And what of our own part in all this? Between us and that ideal of sainthood to which God is directing us there will be a testing of the soul by love. And oh, how unsparing He is when He tries a soul in the furnace of His love! But if we are to be saved He cannot spare. The purifying action must continue until the last stain be removed. Either in this life, or afterwards, must that work be accomplished. Blessed are they who endure their Purgatory here; for, as the Saints assure us, some souls are perfectly

purified in this life.[1] But who are they? They are humble, loving souls who pursue their way with singleness of purpose. Nothing avails to turn them aside, whether it be the suffering of the way, or burden laid upon them, or the work required of them. They are those who through their faithfulness in love perceive the radiant beauty of their ideal, and realize how truly it is worth their while to suffer. They share the joy of the Sacred Heart as in the day of the Passion when the Beloved for the "*joy set before Him endured the Cross.*" They are wholly self-surrendered in suffering to the Divine love.

To some this will appear in the light of a vocation, especially if the call be to secret, hidden suffering. Our Lord Beloved does ask His most intimate lovers to give this proof of their devotion. He sustains them in it by the most simple glance, or understanding of love, from which there is no turning away because of the suffering, but rather a more willing oblation as the Divine love makes all things endurable. Perhaps also we may see in such experience a proof of purity of soul already effected. Such, at least, is the inference from known examples.

This is the love-inspired action of the Saints, which we should try to understand and imitate. Let us humbly recognize and confess our imperfections, and

[1] Cf. *S. John of the Cross.* D.N. Bk. II, chaps. x. and xi. *Living Flame,* stanza ii. 26.

our need of purgation, and at once yield ourselves to the working of Divine love. Let us persevere in the strong desire for spiritual pureness for very love of our Lord. Let us present ourselves in the sincerity of that desire to our Lord, Who seeing our purpose of love will aid us in the accomplishment of it.

What is it, what is the pain, the toil, the weary round, the monotonous affliction, the misunderstanding, the lovelessness to which we must presently return? How it rises before us in contrast with the peace, the light, the almost divine atmosphere of the Retreat. How hard, how deep is the pain to a soul as it realizes all this and meets the tremendous demand of love! Upon the decision of the moment may depend the attainment of the ideal. It is for some the supreme moment. How will they choose? Our Lord awaits their decision. His Sacred Heart is open to them. His desire towards them is concentrated upon the issue of the moment. But, as always in the spiritual life, we prove that the keenness of the pain passes as the decision of love is made. The soul that abandons itself to the Sacred Heart finds both peace and power.

Can we not accept, yea, choose the hard way for very love? If we so choose and accept it the pain is marvellously subdued. The obstruction of self-will is removed. The cause of our worst pain is eliminated. Truly the desire of love is expressed, aspiration

raises the whole being, and spiritual energy is renewed.

All this is true even though the outward conditions are unchanged. But nothing is to be feared by one who loves, and who for love's sake can will to endure. God has very deep, very profound communications of love for that one, tender assurances of His Own approval, holy intuitions of much that lies beyond the present range of its vision. He regards the growing purity of the soul as of gold glowing in the furnace, and the soul likewise in the humility of its love is permitted to know and is glad. No one may share the secret of love communicated to the soul within the fire. The Saints have never told it. The Three Children in the fire knew it; Daniel knew it; and many another—Jeremiah, Ezekiel, S. Peter, S. John of the Cross. They did not, because they could not, declare it; but by their lives of holy power, and of lofty spirituality, and by the pureness of their charity they bore witness to the love that consumed them.

So is God ever purging the gold of His Kingdom. So is He ever making Saints. The purity of the Saint is His care. Are we subjects of His working? Then we must co-operate in love, for we are "*fellow-workers with God.*"

(*b*) The next point to be noticed is contained in the words: He "*received them as a burnt-offering.*"

The significance of the burnt-offering, whether it

were that which was made daily, morning and evening in the Tabernacle,[1] or the particular offering of an individual,[2] appears to have been the completeness of personal surrender. The full and willing surrender of the nation was symbolized in the perpetual burnt-offering; that of individuals when of their own free will they made an offering to God.

There were two conditions laid down for the guidance of the offerer. His offering should be made "*of his own voluntary will*"; and it should be "*without blemish.*"[3] The devotion of the offerer was not to be tainted by secret self-consideration, or any ungenerous thought towards God. We have only to read the warnings and denunciations which are scattered throughout later writings to understand both the danger and the sin of hypocrisy.[4] The spiritual teaching is clear for all to understand. Our self-oblation must be free and it must be pure.

There is yet another significant feature in the sacred ritual of the Tabernacle. The fire upon the Altar of burnt-offering was in the first instance divinely kindled,[5] and thereafter was not to be allowed to go out. "*The fire shall ever be burning upon the Altar; it shall never go out.*"[6]

Let us then understand for ourselves what is

[1] Ex. xxix. 38–42. [2] Lev. i. 2, 4. [3] Lev. xxii. 17–25.
[4] Mal. i. 7–8, 13–14. Cf. Is. i. 11; Jer. vi. 20.
[5] Lev. ix. 24. [6] Lev. vi. 13.

implied when it is said that God receives His Own "*as a burnt-offering.*" It is our own concern. It is set immediately before us in the way of developing holiness. We even perceive the necessity for self-oblation. I must be myself a burnt-offering. The crowning glory of sainthood must be withheld from me if I do not become a living sacrifice to my Lord in the fire of His love. If we understand the operation of that fire as the purifying element, it is easy to see how in its pureness the soul ascends to God, for she has lost the very things which would incline her towards the world. But let us make a willing offering, an unblemished offering. The spotless offering must be the pardoned, cleansed soul, the soul moreover that is in will separated and detached from anything that might stain, or hurt, or hinder.

It becomes a serious question to some who, reading all the disqualifications to be duly heeded by one whose offering would be accepted, see only so many reasons against their own acceptance—the sick, the bruised, the torn, the lame, might not be offered, and they see in themselves the effects of many things of past days—they are sick in soul, bruised and hurt in the battle of life, can *they be accepted?* Is not the idea of the burnt-offering quite beyond them? This is a very possible attitude, and some at this time whose faith has been shaken, whose hopes are dispelled, may be greatly distressed. But from that they may

rise wondrously if they will. The idea of the burnt-offering is certainly not beyond them. No work of love is beyond the power of those whom God restores, absolves, heals. Given that all-important fitness, there is nothing left for the soul to do but give itself freely.

The willing victim of Divine love! That is henceforth the soul's calling. Forsaking more and more the things of the world, and all that does not assist the soul in the service of love, we are to give ourselves in love a willing sacrifice. But yet not without reason, not without motive. We are to recognize the infinite and imperative claim of God; we must perceive the reality of that consequence of love in the Sacred Heart of Jesus which we allow when we say with the Saints that He merits the perfect love of all creatures; we must own and acknowledge the debt of love. Then the offering and sacrifice of the soul in love is sustained through prayer, ministry, work, pain, or joy. The varying expressions of love make for the perfection of the offering.

Contemplate a soul surrendered to the living flame of Divine love, a willing victim! What singleness of purpose; what holy indifference to all that is not God or of God; what persistence in love, what uniform charity in daily life; what serenity, what patience, what zeal; what supernatural forbearance and sympathy; what power unconsciously exerted; what

divine gentleness, and yet what strength of will; what devotion to truth and justice; what faithfulness to ideals! Can we find such? Surely we may find some whose souls are so finely adjusted in grace. Such were some of the Saints, to mention only one, S. John the beloved Apostle.

How precious in the sight of God is such a soul. It is becoming daily purer and more radiant as the living fire penetrates and consumes all that hinders the perfect brightness. Only in this life does that fire *consume*. As the offering is freely made, as the soul aspires through sacrifice to the offering of a *perfect love*, there must be the burning away of all that makes the love less than perfect in its pureness: the earthliness, the dross, the imperfect conceptions of the old nature. And this is not effected without pain. It is altogether a mistake to suppose that sainthood is the result of painless experience. There must be pain if there be love, and pain in proportion to the love. This is the pain of our sacrifice. The ashes remain upon the Altar, that which ascends to God is purified devotion.

"*The fire shall ever be burning upon the Altar; it shall never go out.*" It is not enough to give ourselves with warm devotion, as in Retreat; to feel the first touch of the living flame issuing from the very Heart of God; to rejoice in its wondrous glow, and sweet freshness. Are we ready for the deep penetration of

the fire? Ah, it is sharp, vehement, and disintegrating in its operation. When the soul begins to feel the pain of it, and to realize that to be wholly given as a burnt-offering is more than the adopting of moving devotional thought, then comes the temptation to slackness, and possibly a little lowering of the standard for daily life. . . . "*The fire shall ever be burning upon the Altar.*" The fire is kept burning by constant heaping up of the offerings of love. "*Bind the sacrifice with cords, yea, even unto the horns of the Altar.*" The Divine fire is the love of God, and it cannot burn where there is no offering of love. Renew the love day by day, renew the offerings, bring ever fresh offerings as love discloses its own treasures within the heart. The fire will burn continually, and the pain of sacrifice will cease as there is nothing to be consumed, but only the burning of the offering made entirely one with the fire of God.

How much may be found in any given soul, how much in any life! How precious and how blessed the offering. Let us humbly surrender ourselves, but with as clear knowledge as possible of what the sacrifice involves. Here in simple understanding of love between ourselves and our Lord Beloved, let us seek to *know*, in order to *give*. What does He reveal? To what does He direct our thought? How is He making known to us the secret desire of His Own Heart towards us? . . . That is the secret of the hour

between ourselves and Him. But between this hour and the time when He looks to receive us, lies the period of sacrifice. Will it be said of us among the Saints: "*As gold in the furnace hath He tried them, and received them as a burnt-offering*"? At least let us weigh well the truth that in the perfection of saint-hood there is an element of holiness which is the direct result of the sacrifice of the soul in love. Yes, and because it was a result which, through His Own sacrifice on Calvary, became the very brightness of the glory of our Lord Beloved, it is in His Saints that essential brightness whereby He is glorified in them.

. . . . . .

O Lord Jesus, Who hast taught us to value both suffering and sacrifice for Thy sake; enable us so truly to love Thee that, following the way of Thy Cross, we may fulfil our course and know the joy of service and of victory which Thou dost give to Thy faithful ones; Who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Spirit, One God, world without end. Amen.

V

Of Prayer

After all we have thus far considered, it will be well to turn our attention to the place and value of prayer in the making of a saint. There can be no sanctity without it; and as if to mark for us the will of God with regard to it, we see what has always been the attitude of the Saints towards the duty of prayer, how they esteemed it, taught it, and became themselves examples in the way of prayer. God teaches us through the lives of the Saints. And He even extends and develops that teaching through our own experience in prayer. If we are careful to note our difficulties in prayer, and the blessings and joys of communion with God, we shall see how He is either beginning or developing some important teaching, and always in harmony with that which we discover in the Saints. Few undertakings are beset with so many and great difficulties as prayer; but the guiding principles are the same for all.

Prayer is of first importance in the spiritual life, and is binding upon all, though not all are called to it

in the same degree. But in saying so much we need to guard ourselves against fatal mistakes. Many persons would pray more and better than they do if they knew more about prayer, and understood its course, and how to meet its difficulties. And the universal need of prayer accentuates to some their weakness in this respect. But the way of prayer is not an *unbroken* course through difficulties, and the discipline is not without its joy. Prayer is ever fruitful unto holiness, and therefore are we obliged to give it a large share of our attention.

It is necessary to make clear our understanding of the call or leading to prayer. It is open to misunderstanding, partly through the enemy who will weaken our souls in prayer by many devices, giving to some a proud self-consciousness as to their vocation to prayer; and partly, again, through lack of instruction or direction; because of which souls are confused and soon discouraged. But prayer is the duty of all whatever their state; and faithfulness to that duty must compel attention to the science of prayer. Diligence in prayer leads certainly to experience both of difficulties and of graces; and we must be instructed as to their uses. Difficulty and suffering in prayer are usually in proportion to its blessing, as the Saints have proved.

Let us allow at once the case of those who are called to a life of prayer as Nuns. There are such,

thank God, and they have their place; and it is a question which some should ask of themselves: "*Am I so called?*"

But here and now we are not so much concerned with cloistered souls as with those whose place is in the busy life of the world. There are many such, both men and women, living earnestly and hiddenly. They need our sympathy and help, at least through our intercessions, for their burden is often heavy, and they pass many days in weariness because of the hard insistence of worldliness about them. Some of them attain to great heights of devotion, and great personal holiness. And they do this because they recognize their own limitations, *and do what they can*. Sometimes a rare soul is, so to speak, "discovered"; and we marvel at the evidence which reveals the saint. Some pursue the life of prayer silently, scarcely knowing, not even caring to think, that they are living in any extraordinary way. Doubtless God Who guards their humility makes such lives effectual for good beyond any thought they may have of themselves. Indeed they have little or no ambition outside the pure intention of their love. They love God, therefore they pray; and prayer is the expansion of all life in love, the aspiration to its perfection. They are simple souls: not ignorant or ill-instructed, nor tied down to elementary rules; but pure-souled in love they move with clear directness towards the

things of God. They correspond in grace to the simple perfectness of the Divine nature. They are simple in that sense. Simple and profound; for in them is depth, reality, sureness which baffles all examination. In them is realized the words of the Beloved in the Canticle: "*A garden inclosed is My sister, My spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.*" [1]

The present is a time when the call to prayer should be heard plainly and even imperatively within the loving soul. It has been heard by many. Perhaps we are aware of it even now; it may be only the more plain to us in the silence of the Retreat. How gentle is the voice that pleads with us, urging the importance of the great work of prayer. But why does any one turn away from the voice of the Holy Spirit and the impulse of love within the soul? Is it pride moving the heart to desire some more attractive service? Are they disposed towards some activities, or longing to be recognized for their gifts and abilities? Do they urge that the times call for workers? Do they point to other more strenuous lives, and ask to share their labours? But why not do both? Why not work *and pray?* Only loss must ensue if we insist upon separating them. The call of the time is for both; but for prayer first.

The first step is to recognize the open way of prayer. It is nothing less for each of us than the way of our

[1] Cant. iv. 12.

ordinary life. We have not to step aside to find some new track; we are simply to consecrate and spiritualize the everyday path. We must make it in all things the way of approach to God. As all rays of light converge to the sun, so all right ways of life converge to the Throne of God. Whatever is right in itself gives occasion for communion with God in love —and that is prayer. No one who has really responded to the call to sacrifice, but knows how that very fact has led to a fuller and richer interior life with God. In other words, a new basis for prayer has been found. We have more in common with God, more to suggest the confidences of love as between ourselves and Him, that is the holy intimacy of prayer.

In true prayer the soul is profoundly conscious of God, in Whose presence it attains to a more simple knowledge of itself. Our intercourse with Him tends more and more to the perfecting of our relation to Him, to the removal of those hindrances to communion which we perceive within ourselves. The purity of the Divine Nature, the reality of the Divine love, the essential and infinite holiness of God, reveal the weakness and corruptness of our own nature, while making the strongest appeal to all that is best in us. We can but love the highest when we see it. And that is the fact which affects us so deeply in our prayer. We love, however weakly and poorly, and that meets

with acceptance and encouragement as it touches the Divine love to be taken into it and made strong and pure; for "*God is love.*" With that as the very substance of prayer we begin to realize a little of what it may become through perseverance. And above all we are led to a truer understanding of prayer in itself. We have experience of God inspiring and beautiful which is worth to us infinitely more than any attempted explanations of prayer. Into that experience are taken our thoughts, our desires, and every purpose of soul which we cherish. Some are corrected, others exalted, and all are made reasonable by the pure action of the Spirit of God. Aspirations which in the worldly life appear over-strained, or impossible, are shown to be the really natural expressions of a soul conscious of its own spiritual nature. Our outlook upon life is widened, for we behold it as a part of eternity. All our prayer, even the demand of the moment, will bear relation to eternity. Love will take everything to itself, to bear it all into the very Heart of Divine Love.

All this goes far beyond that very inadequate conception of prayer which embraces only such petitions, or formal prayers, as may satisfy the minimum claims of devotion. Indeed, they will appear so utterly unsatisfying and unworthy of the love we have felt, that we shall adopt a truer method of prayer. We shall want to pray always, and without ceasing; that

is, we shall want always to live and act within that Divine encompassing of love. We shall desire the sustained inspiration for life through a living sense of the presence of God. And this is not impossible of attainment. Love is a faithful guide in such matters.

Yet for all that we shall seek occasions of prayer. We shall make the occasion out of anything and at any time. Love will prompt the soul to free-will acts of service and devotion, and sanctify the commonest work, even making of drudgery a holy exercise. This is not difficult to one whose first care is to give the proofs of love to the Beloved. How readily such an one surmounts the difficulties, and smiles at the unattractive duties. Why? If we could read the secrets of that soul we should know how often some mean occupation has been allied to an experience of love, or to some particular grace. How, then, could there be anything but a loving intercourse with God? And when we go beyond the occasions of our own seeking we find them divinely provided for us, either by some immediate inspiration, or by some gentle constraint of the Holy Spirit. God does not permit the loving, faithful soul to continue without these proofs of His regard. He meets love with love; He gives occasions where occasions are sought; He is the soul's faithful Lover Who will ever exceed in proof of His love. Hence it is that the highest degrees of prayer are always the result of the Divine action

of love. Examination of the experience of the Saints in prayer confirms this. The graces which God is wont to bestow upon faithful souls in prayer are free gifts, they are not to be gained by any effort of our own. They are the gifts of love. But even in the ordinary course of prayer when there are none of these peculiar graces, the most effectual prayer will be that to which the soul is led by the simple impulse of Divine love.

We should mark all such Divine movements and never fail to respond. No one may say to what God may desire to raise the willing soul.

It will be well here to notice a few of the most certain effects of prayer within and upon the soul in its development. As it would be well to examine ourselves upon the points raised, we will consider nothing of a speculative character, but only such as are supported by the actual experience of individuals.

(*a*) Humility. "*It is remarkable how everything that proceeds from God produces humility.*" In prayer we are recipients of lights and graces which we *know* proceed from God. We know this by its effects. In certain states of prayer the soul knows instinctively, but without being able to say what she knows. But we must not too hastily assume the correctness of first impressions, for it is possible to be deceived. We have rather to judge from the effects within ourselves. Every light or grace we may receive, if *they be of God,*

will incline us towards the virtues, especially that of humility. False lights and counterfeit graces would only encourage pride, and end in darkness and loss. For this reason much that is often the result of false mysticism and misguided spiritual effort, leads only to disappointment and deadness of soul.

And this humility is first of all an interior grace. It follows upon some clear intuition of God and Divine love; or upon some interior vision; or when by His Own act of love He compels the soul's attention and holds all its powers in subservience to His purpose. There follows such a sense of our own nothingness, such detestation of pride, such realization of the blessedness of humility, that we choose it and desire it. What is the spiritual satisfaction when the impulse to humility is obeyed, we can see for ourselves by studying the life of some great servant of God. The soul has found a treasure, a secret of loving devotion, and seeks to retain it. Prayer becomes more perfect, and thereafter the life is also outwardly marked by humility; but of such a joyous description, and such winning dignity that its supernatural origin is evident. The humility of a saint is far removed from servility, it is never afraid, and never anything but a mark of spiritual distinction. This is sufficiently evident in the records of saintly lives, and is confirmed by examples in actual life.

(*b*) *Aversion to evil.* When in our prayer we really touch the Divine, the imagination is impressed by an exquisite purity, which "inculcates an extreme aversion to anything evil." It does not follow that nothing evil will be presented to the imagination; for we know how very quickly after our prayer the destructive work of the enemy may be revealed. But our prayer with its pure impression of God will have prepared us. Our will to resist and oppose the enemy has been strengthened by renewed aversion to evil.

That holy hatred of evil, and that stern suppression of themselves lest evil should gain upon them, which is another characteristic of the Saints, is explained by their prayer. Behind their determined opposition to evil was a vital force directed with clear spiritual vision. Walking in the light they could have no fellowship with darkness.[1] But they suffered, and we also must be prepared to suffer, if evil is to be met effectively. Let us beware of compromise with evil. Let us in prayer direct our gaze to the vision of Divine purity, and so shall we meet the evil of the world with holy aversion—not scorning the sinner, but raising the standard of social aims by being faithful in our own lives to the vision beautiful, the vision pure, of God.

(*c*) *Holy indifference to the raillery of the world.*

[1] Cf. Eph. v. 11.

Spiritual persons have often to endure the banter and raillery of those who despise religion, or affect disapproval of their way of life; or they are compelled to listen to tirades against spiritual practices. And again it is their prayer that they will learn how to behave themselves towards their persecutors. Hear how our Lord encouraged and directed one in such difficulty. "*Thou art not created for* THEM, *but for* ME." Thus the allegiance of the soul is both defined and directed. There is no relief promised; and perhaps because there is something of greater value. So many forms of suffering combine in the making of a saint; yes, and through the suffering there is given a certain witness for God. The perfect loyalty of a loving soul may break down the hardness of heart within the persecutor. We are created for *Him* and all life should declare that *we are His*. But it will be in our prayer that we shall perceive the meaning and the cost of loyalty, and be made strong.

(*d*) *A lesson of patience we must learn through a difficulty which, though common, is not always understood.* We are familiar with certain fluctuations in prayer. Days of inspiring devotion may be followed by a time, often lasting through several days, of mental confusion. We are conscious only of interior disorder; we cannot disentangle our thoughts; and no effort of our own avails to bring order out of the confusion.

After some days there may be a return to peace again. We cannot attribute the trouble to anything we have done; we can only say it is an effect of the enemy's malice. He works upon the frontier line of the soul's life and with such persistence that confusion follows, *generally because the trouble is not readily understood.* And we are permitted to suffer in this way; doubtless to the testing of all we had previously gained in prayer. But seeing it is thus but a passing trial, our surest way of meeting it will be to make no prolonged attempt by ourselves to bring order out of the confusion. It will be better to recognize the true nature of the trial and abandon ourselves with all the pain we endure to our Lord, showing Him that for love of Him we will bear even this until His grace in us shall be proved. Or, we may represent to Him the distress, and beg Him to rebuke the enemy and so to deliver us. The result should be a strengthening of the soul in prayer, and a renewal of love. God will Himself assist us, keeping our will united to His, even while we suffer. When that is so we cannot *doubt* His good pleasure towards us, or suppose that the trial will result in anything but good.

But also training and discipline are needful in the prayer-life; and they never fail when the soul is in earnest. God has His Own means and He tempers them to our spiritual needs, and according to His Own

purpose in our sanctification. And in some rare cases loving souls are found who endure it all without faltering, though without external help or guidance, God Himself so directing them in love that they never question His way with them. These are they whom He leads to very great things, and upon them He bestows His best gifts.

Others there are, less strong perhaps in love, who need guidance, and they should seek it. Instruction in prayer is to them essential. They will advance without doubt if they are simple and obedient.

In general all study of the science of prayer is good; and much may be gained by careful reading of the lives of the Saints. But of all helps none are equal to that which each has ever at hand in experience. We should faithfully observe the tendence of all spiritual experience, for thereby we shall gain much valuable knowledge.

We must now consider what are the outward marks which properly attest the prayer-life in the individual. "*By their fruits ye shall know them.*" Generally they are these: humility, hiddenness, an absence of self-will, magnanimity, charity. In some cases it is as though the whole person were taken into a divine atmosphere which is always felt when we approach them. We do not say these evidences are all at once to be observed in their perfection; but they

should become more manifest as the individual advances in prayer. The companionship of the Angels, the closer intimacy with our Lord, the friendship of the Saints; all that we associate with a life characterized by prayer, develops a certain otherness in such souls which we acknowledge the moment we compare them with the common types of the world. Do they know it in themselves? They confess a desire for hiddenness, they love their detachment, they prefer to be silent. Perhaps, too, they know within themselves a gentle domination of Divine love which controls their powers, and checks the motions of pride through which they might lose their peace, or fail in obligation to their Lord.

And all this *may be*, and often is, allied to certain *activity* in the outer life. The secret of all devotion to the will of the Beloved Who calls us to prayer is love—love which will not endure unfaithfulness to His purpose. The prayer-life is for us all the open way to the realization of that which is set before us. It is not impossible to any one, because it embraces all occupation and sanctifies every duty. Through Prayer God is making Saints.

. . . . . .

O Almighty Lord God, Who in tenderest love to Thine Own guidest them in the ways of prayer that they may know Thee in the wondrous communications

of Thy love; assist us who long to be made perfect in love, that we may worthily correspond to Thy holy desire towards us. Impart to us the needful grace whereby, forsaking ourselves, we may be found in Thee, Who art our only true joy, and our eternal satisfaction; through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

VI

Of Expectancy

Among the characteristics of sainthood we discern with especial clearness the glow of devotion. Love burns in the heart and both warms and illuminates the whole inner life. It is manifest in the most ordinary ways. The details of conduct are redeemed from the commonplace by a certain nobility in the soul that directs them. If in the Saint we remark a chivalrous regard for another's welfare, we are carried on to the realization of spiritual ends. The love of the Saint carries him always along a way which to him is full of adventure. He has in view the vision and the ideal. The vision first as that within which the ideal appears ever more resplendent; the light of which transfigures the elements and daily life and makes them subservient to the ideal. This is often most marked in those whose sense of vocation is strongest, and whose response has been most complete. They have left all spiritually for Christ's sake, to find in Him a marvellous lightness and freedom which they are at no pains to disguise or conceal.

Simplicity, truth, guilelessness mark them out as indeed children of the Kingdom. And withal their spiritual attitude is that of expectancy. It is a true note of sanctity, and may be observed in many examples both of developing and of matured holiness. It is a most winning grace, always beautiful as a revelation of the power of love to keep a soul in the freshness of innocence. It is eminently to be desired, as we shall see.

Expectancy is a feature of all true love in created beings; for love in God alone has the note of self-completeness. In the creature it is ever aspiring, ever expecting; and therein consists no small part of the soul's joy. Our experience of love encourages expectancy. There is distinctive pleasure in anticipation, the higher as the moving cause of love is simpler and purer. When it is the love of a soul for God the joy of expectation is deep and tranquil. We are distracted by no uncertainty. Being what He is —that is, being Himself love—there can be no failure: He cannot disappoint His child. If He gave nothing more than the bare assurance of His love, and the simple feeling of it, we should be quite happy to continue in that grace; for to have a feeling of love is to realize that it is rich with possibilities. We are not limited to time in the matter of loving; for eternity cannot exhaust the energy of Divine love. We are thus led to expect some higher manifestation

of love; but are without care to define the manner, because love reposing in love is content. There is certainty within the soul, which is only another expression of its love.

Expectancy is thus an element in that sainthood which we are regarding as a Catholic ideal. If we may claim so much for it in the way of love, it is because we observe it so constantly in the Saints. They are content to love. They are not eager for extraordinary graces, though knowing their precise value. What they desire most of all is the perfection of love, and that is not dependent upon anything that may be seen or spoken about; but upon the hidden operation of sanctifying grace, the purity which God seeks when He would manifest His love to any soul. The expectancy of the Saints, therefore, consists in loving God and knowing that they are loved of Him. In that simple, but absorbing, fact they realize the greatness of the present, and they rejoice in the prospect of love as they contemplate with wonder the vision of eternal life.

From contemplation of this grace in the Saints we turn to the truth about ourselves. Instead of sustained expectancy, is there not sometimes rather a distressing sense of broken experience in our love for God? The gladness of one day is not that of the next. Quite trivial concerns are sufficient to disturb the soul's peace, and suspend the consciousness of love. We

cease to expect the goodness of God because we contemplate the troubles of the moment with dread of the future. We scarcely perceive the imperfection of our spiritual attitude, and the consequent loss of spiritual power. But there is a ready excuse. We always think our own circumstances justify our action. If we recall the examples of the Saints it is with the thought that they had not our trials. But no such reflection can comfort us. We are secretly conscious of having in some way failed in love; and conscience therein speaks truly. There is in every time of trial an experience of love awaiting us. If we rest in love, act in love, endure in love, we find it, a deep realization in God, exceeding sweet, giving strength and confirming the soul in love. We should meet our trials in the pure expectancy of love. God cannot fail us. We must see to it that we do not fail Him.

Does not God expect something from us in proof of love? If we dare to call Him Beloved we must be prepared to meet the expectancy of His love towards us. He will certainly come seeking proof of our faithfulness. We have read the Sacred Scriptures to little profit if we have passed over the clear teachings of the Holy Ghost concerning that very matter.[1] God cannot love us and expect nothing

[1] Cf. Gen. ii. 16, 17; xxii. 1; Ex. xx. 20; Deut. viii. 2, xiii. 3; Job vii. 17–18; Ps. xvii. 3, xxvi. 2; Jer. xvii. 10.

from us. But so wonderful is His testing of us, so great His purpose towards us while He waits expectantly for our love, that He marks His satisfaction by further gifts of grace and love. Let us never say "God withholds His love from me"; but rather ask "what am I withholding from God?" "*God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love.*" [1] God never forgets. It is our forgetfulness of Him that weakens our sense of love and dims the brightness of expectancy. We receive so little because we expect so little. If only we would receive our Lord's words with loving confidence, what might we not experience! "*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*" [2]

Expectancy is also a mystic grace. It is of the very essence of the mystical life that the present holds the promise of something imminent. The soul awaits the moment of revelation with reverent joy, not unmixed with awe; for we cannot anticipate the will of God, or foresee the demands of His love. The trained mystic is expectant, but not impulsive. His experience teaches him to be always ready, but ever patient. Each response of love to the Divine approach quickens his apprehension of the Divine nearness at

[1] Heb. vi. 10. [2] S. Matt. vii. 7, 8.

all times, while he aspires to that which is more distant. If it be true to say that the transcendence of God appeals to the mystic more than His immanence, it would be quite untrue to say that the mystic is unconcerned about His immanence. The expectancy of the true mystic is in part the result of his consciousness of the nearness of God; but to him God is infinitely more than can be known through any present experience. He fears to dishonour God by resting contentedly in His gifts. Indeed, so far is he from doing so that he deliberately pursues his way past and beyond all that is not God in order to find and possess Him alone in love.[1] This explains the action of some rare souls. St. Mary Magdalene turned away from the Angels at the Sepulchre to pursue her lonely quest for the Sacred Body of her Lord.[2] The Bride in her search for her Beloved would not be detained, but went alone into the darkness to find Him.[3] Great Saints appear sometimes to show even disesteem of special graces; but only because they desired the Giver above His gifts. It is this persistent pursuit of the highest as the sole object of love that gives to their expectancy the added note of certainty. They love, and their love can never admit of disappointment. They have experience of Divine love and they *know*.

[1] Cf. *S. John of the Cross.* Sptl. Cant., stanza vi.
[2] S. John xx. 14. [3] Cant. iii. 1–4.

The Gospels contain some records of the Great Forty Days from which we may learn something of this mystical expectancy. The Holy Apostles were prepared by the sudden appearance of the Risen Lord to expect Him at any time. They must have gone about with an air of expectancy, reverent, joyful, wondering, as the days passed. He was the centre of thought and experience to them as more and more they apprehended the mystery of the Resurrection, and its power. His Ascension raised the whole of this wonderful experience to the glory of its consummation. Whatever were the graces of the Risen Life, they were incomplete without the glory to which they pointed. And that is the truth about all graces of mystical experience.

We are in the Way. Our Lord may grant us to-day some experience of Himself. We are concerned not to miss that which He desires for us. We cannot by any effort of our own effect anything; but we may lose much through unpreparedness. And so we abide in expectant love, in calm faith, keeping our souls in holy detachment from all that might delay our response to Him, even for a moment. We do not forget the warning conveyed by the words of the Bride: "*My Beloved put in His Hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for Him. I rose up to open to my Beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh,*

upon the handles of the lock. I opened to my Beloved; but my Beloved had withdrawn Himself, and was gone: my soul failed when He spake: I sought Him, but He gave me no answer.[1] Even in well-ordered devotion there may be some point of weakness, some secret defect; our love may not be so simple and pure that response will be instantaneous. Wherein was the Bride found wanting? It is hard to say; but may it have been that in expectancy of love she should have been already standing at the door? If we may allow this, we have an indication of the expectancy which the Beloved both seeks and approves in those who love Him.

This view of expectant love is wholly consistent with discipline, and indeed implies its necessity. The untrained soul will never be perfect in expectant love. The expectancy of the Saints is a strong grace lovingly sustained. We must train ourselves if we would always know the approach of the Beloved. The spiritual faculty with which we feel His nearness must be purified in the very fire of love, and relied upon with simplicity. Thus the love of the soul will become increasingly pure, until it responds to every movement of Divine love. But the acquisition of this grace is more rapid where there is perfect abandonment to Divine love, and true self-renunciation. Children may exhibit the grace by reason of their

[1] Cant. v. 4–6.

simplicity in love, whereas others, older in years and affected by the world, attain to it in a less perfect degree. How far in any case it is infused rather than acquired is not very certain. Doubtless it is both infused and acquired; but as generally with infused graces the requisite state or disposition of the soul is known only to God. Our part is to train ourselves in simple and unfailing response to Divine love, knowing the generosity of God Who is ever ready to bestow His gifts, and Who never fails the surrendered soul.

It thus becomes the daily care and constant joy of the faithful. Not even the pain and discipline of life can rob them of their bright expectancy; for they look through and beyond these things to that which must certainly follow. Experience teaches the loving soul that shadows and darkness have an end. "*Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.*" [1] There is no ultimate disappointment for the soul that can endure. The secret of endurance is love, and love cannot fail, it must attain to its own completeness. To love perfectly is to be already victorious. Therefore we may confidently expect the showing of God's love through the days. No one can fail of the proofs of His regard who is lovingly expectant of them; for there is the meeting of love wherein God and the soul are united.

[1] Ps. xxx. 5.

We bring this most particularly into our prayers and Communions. Why are prayers unsatisfactory if not because we have sought nothing in love? Why are Communions cold and without their full blessing if not because we have expected so little in love? Expectancy with regard to Communion especially should be encouraged. There is a certain danger of perfunctoriness in preparation for Communion where the expectancy of love is not maintained. Frequency of Communion should be allied to very great carefulness in preparation of a deeply spiritual character. Formal preparation must pass into that of love, of quickened faith, of anticipation. Many feel the necessity without always making the effort to prepare in love whether for adoration or Communion. We could not approach our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament with expectant love without being in some way confirmed in love. Even though we make our Communion, or offer our worship, in dry faith only because of hidden spiritual suffering or discipline; yet because we make an offering of our will, we are inwardly strengthened to endure in the present, while for the future we are prepared against the day when God will restore to us the fuller light of His love.

But who could ever declare the manifold showings of His love to those who approach the altar prepared in love! They are so simple, interior, intimate, and joyous! They are what could only be expected from

the Beloved as He meets His Own. The wonder is that we ever permit the dullness which clouds expectancy. It is want of thought, doubtless, and perhaps lack of thankfulness and joy because we have taken even the favours of our Lord rather as a matter of course. We do not treasure His gifts as we might, and so do not always seek Him with gladness. But if we would with every Communion renew our self-oblation in sheer gratitude for His gifts, there would be many wonders of grace added for our consolation. We hinder the Divine working when we take so little trouble to keep love and faith clear and strong; and we deprive ourselves of the very joy we desire.

Expectancy presupposes a state of love within the soul. If that is being made perfect, how great and how joyous should be our expectation of the consummation of love in the life to come! Love cannot continue for ever in a state of incompleteness. *It must be consummated.* It is eternal because it is of God. To that we look. Day by day through life which soon must pass the time-limit of earth we draw nearer to that great event. The light of it becomes clearer as the expectant soul pursues its way. The very certainty which we feel as we regard the end witnesses to the truth of all that we expect. So far from failing in confidence we grow more confident with the days. Love possesses the verity of eternal things, and anticipates the day of fruition. This is confirmed by

the testimony of countless Saints. Their passing has been the very excess of expectancy. If to their sight were given visions of delight, to their hearts was given a more sure support in love, that, ravished out of the bonds of earth, they might fly to the very consummation of all with their Beloved.

Sometimes it may be given us to know through love the depth and height of all that awaits us. Let us then respond with joyous, expectant love. "*Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit.*" [1]

. . . . . .

O Almighty Lord, Whose treasures of grace and love are infinite, and Who delightest in renewing Thy favour towards those who love Thee; grant us to be so strengthened and sustained in devotion that we may be ever expectant of the proofs of Thy loving-kindness, and always rejoicing in Thee with thanksgiving; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Whom we adore, with Thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever. Amen.

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10.

VII

Of the Power of the Saints

THE Saints have power. On earth their influence was always great in proportion to their holiness. Often, as in the case of martyrs, it was greater than they knew. And even the hidden servants of God, men and women whose circumstances shut them in from observation, were a power in the world. But for the Saints what would the world have been? True, we can point to much that is corrupt, much that is wrong; and the struggle between good and evil continues—nay, even appears more desperate as time goes on. But it is the same struggle which in past generations tested the Saints, and is testing souls to-day. The power of the Saints was never overcome. Individuals lived and died, but their cause, the cause of God and the Faith, was taken up by others; and to-day we are engaged on its behalf.

The Saints were powerful in their lives, strong in the purity of their motives, prevailing in their prayers. They lived, they contended, they died; but has their power, their influence, ceased? No. "Their vitality

is shared with us. . . . The deposit they left on earth is our chief asset. On it we build our own contribution. What direct efforts they are making for our edification and encouragement, to what extent an individual hand there touches a life here, does not appear. But the self-giving of the whole rushes through generous arteries, and gives us nourishment and cheer. We are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses—not idle observers but sympathetic brethren." [1] If the memory of their deeds is precious to us, if the fragrance of their lives lingers in the heavy, over-charged atmosphere of the modern world, still more do we love to remember them as they are with God. They have power through their life in God. On earth their power developed as their union with God in love was perfected. A soul in union with God is identified with Him in will, in purpose, in power. The service of its life is an extension of His operation. Hence we perceive the reasonableness of the Saints in their utter repudiation of self-interest. They had espoused the cause of God, they sought nothing for themselves.

The same is true of the Saints now. More than ever are they identified with the cause of God. They know, as we on earth cannot yet know, how the human soul has been from all eternity destined to that participation and active co-operation with God.

[1] Bp. Brent: *The Mount of Vision*, p. 121.

That intimate purpose of the Incarnation of the Eternal Word is plainer to them than it is to us. All their prayers for us are in the terms of the magnificent wholeness of the purpose of God through man. When we ask their prayers we are often held by some pre-consideration of self, or influenced by purely temporal conditions; but we should widen our thoughts and expand our intentions towards the wideness of their vision. They and we, with the holy souls, *are* the Catholic Church. When, therefore, we celebrate their memory, keep our Saints' Days, let us do more than remember their lives and their achievements on earth, let us rise to contemplation of their place in the scheme of God's working, and rejoice that we know them. We can do more: we can rejoice in our own share in the work which they advanced in the world. We are fighting the same battle, defending the same Faith, persevering in the same devotion, held within the same strong love of God. And the consciousness of oneness of life and love with them makes the present very full of meaning to us. We perceive the way to power.

This is a feature of sainthood we cannot wholly ignore. The will to holiness must be the will also to power through holiness; not the self-conscious power of proud human nature, but the un-self-conscious power of the Saint—that is, of one lost to self in God. The achievement of sanctity issues in

power. There is no escape from this. We cannot become holy without incurring responsibility. The more saintly a soul becomes the more it must be identified with God in the living purpose of His love. That is, the power of God is manifested in and through the life. Sainthood is a glorious achievement! And that not only, nor even chiefly, as a merely personal matter; but because of that wideness of sympathy, and beauty of service, into which it takes us. The vision as we behold it in God Whose life is revealed to us, Whose love enkindles us, is beautiful indeed. We see a world, yea, an universe of love, radiant in the light of God, pulsating with life, thrilling through the heroic deeds of great souls, and we long to do ever so little to exalt our own world to its transforming spiritual life. We have felt the touch of that life, we shall henceforth, we hope, abide in it; but we shall not be content to remain alone in it while the great longing of souls around us remains inarticulate. We must through sympathy, devotion and service voice the yet unspoken prayer of the countless souls who see not the vision. If we are attaining to the glory of sainthood, then the glow of its light, and the power of love in which it consists, must be known and felt around us. It is not an effect that we shall see and take account of; but it must be evident to the wanderers, the loiterers, the indifferent and the sinful, a

token of the life to which all are called and to which all should aspire.

Here let us look out over the prospect. We will to be holy, we aspire to sainthood. During these days some lights have fallen around us. God has been with us, speaking to us interiorly. The way is clearer, the ideal of sainthood more inspiring; but very much awaits our effort, and everything is calling for the reality of love. We discern among the conditions of ordinary life some that will *encourage* us, more that will *test* us, and many that may *hinder;* but we think our love will be equal to the demands of the days. And then perhaps there comes a touch of *fear*, as we recall experiences of other days, as we remember persons and things, and all they mean to us in their relation to our course in this world. Is that attractive spiritual vision after all *real?* Are not the nearer things *more real?* We confess to a fear of others, to a fear of ourselves. . . . And yet it is all unworthy. It does not come from God. It might be reasonable if we were called to stand alone. But the thought of the Saints has shown us we are not alone. Each of us has a place, our *own* place, in the vastness of Catholic life, as a member of the mystical Body of Christ. Through that Body the power of God is being manifested; and out of that life, the life of God, comes the intense personal word to *brace* us:

"*Be strong*"! And through the vision our Lord Beloved encourages us. Shall we retain the vision, or will the darker prospects of the world rise between us and it? Shall we lose heart? Are we already fearing the days to come? Here, while the vision is open, tell Him your fears, your dread of the burden, your shrinking and self-mistrust. Rest your whole being in His love, His Heart. Then you touch that wondrous point of truth, that sustained act, in which the soul's likeness to God is merged into the perfections of His Being. He takes away all fears by drawing the soul into yet closer love; and in the consciousness of *that* embrace, we know that nothing matters but God and His love. But in this there is more than consolation. There is a taking of the soul into the very heart of life; there is an increase of power. The will to do becomes an act of entire self-giving. That is the response of love in which there is no fear.

Great things await the doing. And they are to be done *by us*. How may we know them and rightly appreciate them? . . . By beholding them in the vision spread out to us, the vision of God, of love, of life. This is the way of the Saints: to see all things in God, not as they exist in themselves only, but also as they stand related to us in the world of spiritual activities. It is a soul-compelling vision, as we may learn for ourselves through many a noble life. Then through the vision comes the voice, the

secret call which is inspiration and command in one. When God calls He also empowers. He never leaves the soul at a loss in the consciousness of its own weakness. He conveys the strong sense of power to do what love inspires to be done. And this affects us strongly when we are most concerned for the spiritual good of other souls. We may feel the very working of God into which He is taking our efforts. As one has said, recording her own experience : " The soul is conscious that, in virtue of their union with our Lord Jesus Christ, she can obtain some good for their souls and influence them powerfully, not by touching their will, for God Himself respects the liberty of the will, but by co-operating by prayer with the action which God exercises on the inclinations of these souls in order to dispose them to receive His grace." [1]

And mark further : the great calls are those which come usually in the secret ways of prayer when the soul is separated unto God, when the distractions of earth are silenced, when there is nothing to hinder His inward speaking; when with voiceless utterance He makes known the desire of His love to the soul that in preparedness of love is able to receive it. It is in such exalted moments that His most precious words are understood. When we marvel at some illuminating thought of the Saints, or some great

[1] *The Sptl. Journal of Lucie Christine,* p. 263.

prophetic utterance, or the wisdom of some far-reaching work initiated by some obscure lover of God, we forget the intensity of their devotion, and the purity of the prayer, which was the occasion of the inspiration. But it was there. And all the strength of patience, perseverance, and firmness—in short, all the power evinced through their faithfulness, began at the same time. It was conveyed to them in the very grace of their prayer. What an encouragement to us who, having understood the thought of God towards us in our prayer, are yet not altogether sure within ourselves. We may know if a thing be of God by the very consciousness of power coupled with freshness of desire in devotion.

As these have been days of prayer, so, too, must the life afterwards be sanctified, filled with prayer. Take courage in the thought of added power through prayer as you are first attracted to God, and then held to Him in love. Whatever be your place, or work, there is power for achievement with every step towards the desired perfections of sainthood. This is not merely a truth deduced from the experience of the Saints, and the testimony of their lives. I will ask you to follow me in the consideration of a strikingly beautiful mystical representation of a soul enriched with graces through prayer.

"*Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army*

with banners"?[1] This passage refers, doubtless, in the first instance, to the Church in her beauty, and glory, and power, as ideally the Bride of Christ. But it is also used of the faithful soul, and so, pre-eminently of our Lady, who in nothing fails of the ideal. It is true of every soul in proportion to its faithfulness to Christ the Beloved. Let us contemplate this beauteous soul whom He has adorned and made mighty in grace.

She looks "*forth as the morning*"—she has left the clouds and shadows of the night of her earthliness. She is seen, as it were, piercing or parting the early mists like some beautiful morning ray. *She is* "*fair as the moon.*" She is clothed with a glory of light; but it is not of herself, it is of Him Who loves her. It is the fairness of her Beloved which is reflected in her. There is no pride in this. The Saint is indeed a light-bearer, but the light is not from himself. The chief beauty of sainthood is humility. She is "*clear as the sun.*" She is radiant with the vision of the Beloved. She is yet more radiant through her union with Him, burning with His love. Aflame with Divine love she glows as the sun itself. She is "*terrible as an army with banners.*" This may signify the indwelling of the King, for where the King is there is the symbol of His dominion. But the banners are also the virtues which adorn the soul; evidences

[1] Cant. vi. 10.

of power which the enemy fears. They cannot be unobserved. They are not flaunted in defiance, but are the symbols of a conquering host; for every virtue is won through conflict, and is therefore as a banner of victory. The soul is seen there in power, and bears her trophies.[1]

And this mystical representation of the soul bearing the evident marks of its experience both of prayer and conflict—of prayer in conflict, and of conflict in prayer—is given us by the Holy Ghost. It is no mere picture inspired by conceit, or perverted imagination. It is the soul as God regards it in the beauty of His Own gifts, the enabling of His Own love and grace. For a moment we gaze upon our ideal—more beautiful than any thought of our own—it is God's ideal for us. And we may take courage. "Oh," we say, "I am not that!" No, not yet; but when God reveals His purpose, and shows what He wills us to become, He is ready also with helps and graces for the task before us. At least, let us be encouraged. Let Him encourage us! That is the better thought. He loves and therefore encourages the soul to strive for the perfection of love.

We might break off our meditation at this point, feeling that nothing could be added to so glorious a vision of the favoured soul. But there is an important

[1] Cf. *S. John of the Cross:* Sptl. Cant. xxx. 12; *Living Flame,* iv. 9.

addition which the Beloved Himself makes to the picture of the Saint for our understanding. Three verses below that which we have just considered, the question is asked: "*What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies.*" [1] There is the underlying thought of dancing, as of joy. There is the idea of a choir; and the word armies really is camps. The word is in the dual form. How, with this dual meaning, are we to apply the term "*choirs of camps*" to the soul that is already seen in the glory of supernatural powers? We may understand it of the mutual rejoicing of the soul and the Beloved. In the joy of the Saint there is not only the gladness of the soul in consciousness of its possession of love and grace; but also the gladness of the Beloved in the soul's perfections which is communicated to it. The joy of the Saint is therefore in the Beloved, and His joy is in the Saint. Our Lord has unspeakable joy in His Sacred Heart through the union He has effected by love with the human soul; and He communicates it to the Saint and it becomes a corresponding joy in His heart. It can never be too plainly declared that the joy of the perfect is that which springs from union in love with our Lord Beloved.

The contemplation of this joy enables us to perceive its unearthliness. It consists in the realization of

[1] Cant. vi. 13.

all that God is to the soul. Beginning with the soul's likeness to Himself, her endowment by creation, He has multiplied graces until that likeness has become more or less resplendent. He beholds in her the perfection of predestined power. He rejoices in her; and by that very act of joy exalts her to yet more perfect union. It is the beginning of that which awaits her in Heaven itself.

But why try to speak of that which passes speech? Because we want to cheer our spirits here with the certainty of all that God wills to effect in us. There is far too little of the joy of the Saints manifest in us. Perhaps the absence of joy may be taken as an index to the soul's condition. Let us have more deep full joy both in personal and Catholic life. But let us attain to it in the right way. An assumed joy is no joy at all. It must well up from the heart that is joyous in its own deep consciousness of God, of love, of life, of power. It must be spontaneous and free. It will be all this as it increases within, day by day, as we grow into the glorious, the tremendous, reality of love between ourselves and God.

Through all life as it proceeds along the inspired way of Divine love there will flow this intangible, ever present, ever stimulating, force which is both power and joy as the soul abides in union with the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It is He, the Beloved Himself, Who calls attention to the joy of His Own. They

show it forth, but they do not talk about it. He in His regard makes it known, as being perhaps one of the dearest proofs in His eyes of that love in which He is ever one with them and they with Him. Be it ours to grow in love, and through love to power, through love and power to the pure joy of the Saints.

. . . . . .

O God, Whose power is declared in the lives of Thy Saints; give us, we pray Thee, increasingly the gifts of Thy grace, and enable us so truly to renounce ourselves that we may never by our own weakness through pride hinder the work Thou wouldest accomplish by us, or frustrate the purpose of Thy love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

VIII

Of the Reward of the Saints

THERE is something rather wonderful about the end of a Retreat. A certain wistfulness holds our thoughts. A sense of the Holy Spirit's presence and power has grown during the days. Separated for a time from the engrossments of the world, we have gone forward until the life which will presently claim our attention again has assumed a remoteness, while more spiritual and divine interests have assumed a nearness which is very beautiful to us. We can understand the Apostle on the Mount of Transfiguration when he cried: "*Lord, it is good for us to be here.*" But like him we have to descend to the plain and meet the claims of the life which has not yet ended for us. And like him we are to take with us the spiritual enrichment vouchsafed us in the days of vision. We have sought not spiritual diversion, but spiritual renewal, in the pure healthfulness of the Divine presence. And now we must go out again and submit to the test of the world.

But before we do this, before we leave the sacred

enclosure of the Retreat, there is a point to be considered which cannot be neglected by any whose hearts beat high for the achievement of sanctity. God has not left it out of His directions for us, and we need it both for our encouragement and also for the completeness of our ideal. We must meditate upon the reward of the Saints.

In the way of perfection the faithful soul develops in sanctity towards the fullness of its reward; indeed, we may truly say, it is never without its reward. Whatever be the untold wonder and glory of the eternal reward—and we know it is not possible for us to know its fullness here, nor even perceive its greatness, there is both a *present* reward, and also a revelation of *future* reward which, if we contemplate aright, will be to us an immeasurable encouragement. In this life the reward is partial and contingent; in the life to come it is entire and permanent. We must consider them in order; the one is the crown of the other.

We must take account of one significant fact. In Holy Scripture emphasis is laid upon the reward as a free gift; it is not *earned* by man, but *given* by God. This does not mean that we have nothing to do of ourselves; but that being what we are we cannot of ourselves merit the reward. But while on the one hand we humbly acknowledge our poverty and weakness, on the other God is so faithful that He never

passes by any act or service on our part, but rewards it with an added degree of grace.[1] Every degree of grace has its own peculiar glory; and it is a glory which may be kept, guarded by faithfulness. Hence the assured happiness of one who dies in grace. Every day grace may increase, and the reward: or rather that increase of grace is itself the reward. The happiness which follows attests the reward. It is better not to confuse the happiness we feel in the reward with the reward itself. Many a soul receives grace without an immediate sense of happiness, because in the midst of trials it is not always that we can feel the happiness for the stress of the days. But the reward is ours in proportion to our faithfulness to grace.

1. *Present rewards.*—And here let us regard them as assured to us in the days to come. As certainly as there are spiritual trials before us, so as certainly are there the rewards. And therefore the ideal of saint-hood may be discerned with peculiar clearness through the mist of fears and apprehensions which so quickly rises as we contemplate our return to the world when these days of inspiring devotion are over. Think of some of the rewards which await you.

When temptation is resisted and overcome, grace is increased; and the valour of the soul rises to new efforts. We are ready to pursue the enemy who for

[1] Cf. S. John i. 16.

the moment has been checked. "*I will follow upon mine enemies, and overtake them; neither will I turn again until I have destroyed them.*" [1]

When persecution is rightly endured the soul is confirmed in the virtues of charity, humility, meekness, and fortitude, and becomes exceeding strong. The enemy at the same time is weakened. Perhaps so were the holy Martyrs able to resist and endure. A soul that is faithful under persecution grows in interior grace through its share in the Passion of Jesus, and attains to a holier likeness to Him.

When we overcome the interior difficulties encountered in the spiritual life, there is a certain clearing of the faculty of spiritual vision; and a bracing of the soul in all its powers, so that it both aspires to the glory and beauty of holiness which it beholds, and more steadily climbs the ascents. It is not too much to say the soul that is so faithful under interior spiritual trials fears less the exterior troubles that may arise. They know both the strain and the gain of inner conflicts. As spiritual pain is harder to bear than physical, so the reward and enrichment which follow upon faithful endurance exceed anything which is gained by the lower victories. It may happen that the two modes of suffering may be combined; and then it will be proved that the greater peace follows upon the spiritual victory.

[1] Ps. xviii. 27.

When for love of God some sacrifice has been made, there is an access of love—not *feeling* merely, but strong ennobling love—which is yet tender and wondrously sympathetic. It places the soul in a certain relationship of advantage towards others; and yet not by its own seeking, but because through the love which made the sacrifice possible, a Divine light illumines the life, and shines as it were through the soul. Very precious to the Beloved is that one who in the power of His love rises through sacrifice to the glory of His Own perfected Offering. In the achievement of love through sacrifice we find a secret of the Saints, communicated to every one who pursues the natural course of love which ends in sacrifice.

As love increases all these spiritual efforts are made with devotion, and are followed by further gifts of grace, and above all by closer union of the soul with God. The reward of love is love; and that is given continuously to the faithful soul.

Great care is needed on our part if we would not only have the reward of love, but also keep it. Only through perseverance is it possible. We must allow no weariness in our well-doing, whatever the dullness of life. I say dullness, but in truth there should be no such thing in any life. Not only is it a reproach to any one in these tremendous times, but also it is a reproach to any recipient of Divine grace. Who could be dull in the realization of Divine love? Who

that knows the Sacred Heart of Jesus could long continue the victim of depression? Who that has adored our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament and received Him in Communion, can be unmindful of the spring of life within, or be wholly insensible to its immortal flow? No! Dullness there must not be; but joy in God, pure and exultant because of all we are finding and proving as love penetrates the hard conditions of the days, and glorifies them.

Conscious of love's reward, guarding the treasure of grace, we have a mission to fulfil. Sainthood is not a thing apart; but an achievement of love which enriches the common life. All that we receive as the reward of effort, in the way of sanctification, all the increase of grace, and the enrichment of love should make life beautiful. Yes, and attractive; for all these should result in "graces of personality which make holiness a thing to be loved." We are thus responsible for the reception of present rewards. The treasure we hold, even that which has increased as we hope in these days of retreat, is not for ourselves alone. It could not be even if we so desired it. As members of the Body Mystical we contribute of necessity to the wealth of the whole. Every Saint contributes to the pervading spiritual consciousness of the Catholic Church, giving of the treasure of his own soul. In part this is an unconscious effect of individual holiness, and in part the result of deliberate

working, of strong purposeful love. But we know how impossible it is to keep our treasure when we do not employ it. Was there ever a time of greater opportunity? And can we doubt that God is giving us the grace needful for the time? The very consciousness we have of grace, and that realization of love which is our joy, must urge us forward to that witnessing for God which is the prerogative of the Saints.

2. *Future rewards.*—The reward of the Saints in Heaven is the perfection of that which they began to receive on earth. Their glory and blessedness bear the closest relation to their earthly achievement. Of course it is immeasurably beyond anything experienced on earth. Liberated from the bonds of the flesh and all earthly conditions of temptation, the soul eagerly advances to its long-desired perfection, and finds itself with power of attainment through all it has won on the earth plane. And yet there is more. It would appear that something is added at the very last to the grace that has been triumphantly kept; as though the grace of final perseverance, which is the very perfection of sanctifying grace, were followed by that which is even higher, something more glorious, a radiance of immortality. So long as we are in the body we bear about us the uncertainty of mortality. There is a possibility of defection. If

there be any exception to that rule it is in the case of souls whom God has raised already in this life to the highest possible degree of union in love. But we dare not assume so much for ourselves, and so we accept the rule as stated.

If in what we have said we have not ascribed too much to the grace of final perseverance, we see it is the grace which crowns the earth life. In the consequent reward will be found the glory of every grace in the past that has been kept. An exquisite beauty will have been fashioned out of the hard conditions through which the soul has risen through grace. We may even think of the soul as eternally adorned with the graces she has made her own by very faithfulness in the use of them. Each soul will be as a vessel precious and beautiful, worthy of its place, and reflecting the Glory of God. And all the beauty will be that of love as the unchanging reward of love.

Far-off glimpses of love's glory are gained even here. We do not always make enough of them, or value them as we should. Perhaps we do not expect them as devoutly as we might. But could we suppose that they who are destined for that life of eternal glory would have no prevision of it? Surely not. Indeed the very contrary is the fact. We know a little of what the Saints have experienced; they have told us of knowledge gained through express revelation.

We have been moved to desire for ourselves an equal clearness and certainty of outlook, an anticipation as joyous as theirs. "*Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.*" [1]

But we pass from these assurances to our own previsions and intuitions. They are given to us all, I think, and we must try to understand them and the manner of receiving them. They come to us as flashes of interior light, in times when our inner consciousness is supernaturally illuminated. We have perceptions of the glory which should properly crown the perfect development of grace, holy inspirations which spring from deepened apprehension of the eternal character of the gifts of God. And then, too, faith and love raise the soul to sublime heights of vision whence the future is seen as a coming glory to the faithful soul.

If we have all this it should make the thought of future rewards very precious, and full of encouragement, in the dark dark days when we see nothing and can only hold on with difficulty. If in these days there have been given to us any interior lights by which we have discerned the purpose of God in our perfection, or if we have felt the inbreathings of the

[1] 2 Tim. iv. 8.

Holy Spirit of love, urging us to effort, let us treasure them and learn from them. We may regard them as divinely given for the express purpose of encouragement. Have they not been closely connected with experience of trial, or some difficulty in spiritual achievement? As a rule we receive the truest lights when we are *most desirous* of right, when love rises to some height, and the will inclines more to God. It is true at such times we may be painfully aware of weaknesses and hindrances; but after all we are then most certainly under the guidance of God, Who to encourage us has led us to a more open vision of the Heavenly way. We shall never exhaust the wonderful encouragements of God. They are never absent from His dealings with us. They have been given freely in these days, and they will not be withdrawn in the days to come.

Soon we shall return to the well-worn path of our ordinary life. Before us are days of work and effort; days when resolution will be tested; when aspirations will be less free and spontaneous; when prayer may be dull and our spirits heavy. Shall we be ready for such trials? Shall we yield to discouragements? Surely not! We have sought the grace of God. He has given it. *We have the power.* Let us hold in love the treasure of grace. It is capable of vast increase, even though our days be dull. We should

not be afraid of a dull day, for it is but a reminder of the earthly state that has an end. And even dull days are blessed with many gifts. Soon, it may be, they will pass into brightness, and lead us to the glory of eternal light.

And so we end the days which have been so blessed. We have tried to discern through all the confusion of temporal experience the ideal of Sainthood. We see it is not an ideal reserved for the few, but for every one who with courage meets the difficulties of life, and with equal courage, and simple devotion, aspires to the highest. It is no impossible achievement; for it is only love carried to its proper end in the life of the Christian. The glory that invests the Saint is more than a mere clothing of a mortal with the light of God; it is an interior perfection which, because it is of God as the fruit of love and grace, transfigures the whole being. And if we think with joy of this holiness as given to us of God, something for ourselves, we cannot rest in that thought, we must rise to the greater joy suggested by S. Paul. Our Lord will come "*to be glorified in His Saints*":[1] the glory of the Saint is that wherewith he contributes to the glory of his Lord. The self is lost sight of in the eternal glory of Him Who is All in all.

. . . . . .

[1] 2 Thess. i. 10.

O God, Who art Thyself the Reward of the blessed, and Who to all Thy gifts of grace in them dost add that of radiant immortality; enable us so to use Thy grace in this present time, that, persevering to the end, we may be received into that same blessedness of Thy Saints; through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

THE END

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